

COMPOSTING GRASS MOWINGS

Grass mowings are very useful in the home compost bin:

- They generate heat, speeding up the composting process
- They introduce moisture, balancing with drier ingredients
- They contain lots of nitrogen and so enrich your compost.

Grass that has been treated with “Feed and Weed” containing clopyralid should not be used around the garden as this chemical is very persistent and can harm the growth of other plants.

Add grass mowings to a compost bin

Up to 30cm depth of grass mowings at one time, mixing them in with what is already there.

A deeper layer will go slimy and smelly unless mixed with dry, open materials like shredded prunings or shredded paper. These absorb some of the moisture from the grass mowings and create air pockets.

The micro-organisms that do the composting for us need air.

The micro-organisms that operate without oxygen produce unpleasant smells.

Other ways to use your grass mowings:

Grass mowings can be used as **mulch** round shrubs and trees.

- When the soil is moist, spread a thick layer of newspapers or cardboard on the soil surface to prevent weed germination, then cover with grass mowings.

- Top up the grass as it dries and shrinks.

They are slightly acidic

so make a good

mulch for acid

loving soft

fruit like

raspberries

and

gooseberries

or for

preventing

potato scab.



Make a special grass mowings bay

If your garden produces a lot more mowings than other types of garden waste, you may need a special composting unit for the mowings. This should have fairly open sides, like wire netting or old pallets. These allow some of the heat and wet to escape.

The mowings should be mixed with material like shredded prunings, straw or leaves. Shredded or crumpled paper (balled as if you were going to use it to light a fire) also works but takes at least two years to break down.

Build 2 grass bays and use them on a two year rotation: fill one bay in the first year and leave for a whole year to rot down. After this length of time there will be good compost to use in the garden. Fill the 2nd bay during the 2nd year.

Fresh grass mowings generate a lot of heat so can be used as an instant **hot bed** for courgettes or squashes.

- Dig out a patch, roughly 30cm square and 5cm deep.
- Pile up fresh grass mowings to a height of at least 15cm and cover with soil.
- Excavate a well in the centre and fill it with home made compost.
- Cover the spot with a permeable membrane, this holds in the moisture and heat and stops weed growth.
- Cut an X in the membrane and plant your courgette or squash through this into the compost, making sure the roots don't touch the grass underneath.
- Water thoroughly.

The heat produced by fresh grass mowings can be used to kill perennial weeds like ground elder and nettles. [See Composting Perennial Weeds].

If you still have too many grass mowings, consider producing less. Why cosset and feed your lawn so that it grows so fast that mowing becomes a trial?

Stop feeding the lawn.

Do not water the lawn – even brown grass comes back to life once it rains.

Sometimes, during sunny weather, leave off the grass box and let the mowings lie.

These wilt quickly and give the grass a little nutrient for free. Worms take the little bits of grass down into the soil, as long as you haven't poisoned these useful creatures with herbicides and moss killers.

For more information on home composting or to contact us - www.askorganic.co.uk or 01450 860778

ASK Organic, in partnership with Scottish Borders Council, has a Home Composting Display within Woodside Plant Centre, by Ancrum, Jedburgh.



**Waste Aware
Scottish Borders**

For information on Waste and Recycling contact Scottish Borders Council Recycling Team on 0300 100 1800 or www.scotborders.gov.uk/recycling

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